



MEAP

Coordinator Update

Office of Educational Assessment – Michigan Educational Assessment Program – Vol. 1, No. 1 - January 16, 2004

MEAP COORDINATOR UPDATE! - WHAT'S THIS?

Welcome to your first issue of the MEAP Coordinator Update. Through this new publication, the MEAP staff will publish items of interest to school district MEAP Coordinators. Our goal will be a bi-weekly update, published as appropriate throughout the school year, with a less frequent publication during the summer months.

Distribution of the Update will be via email. This issue will be available on the web at: <http://www.meritaward.state.mi.us> after Tuesday, February 20.

Your suggestions for content are welcome. Please send any comments via email to: meap@michigan.gov or call toll-free 1-877-560-8378.

STATE BOARD OF ED VOTES TO KEEP CUSTOM-DEVELOPED TESTS IN MEAP

On Tuesday, January 13, 2004, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to keep the MEAP as the current testing system for Michigan students. To keep you informed, permission has been obtained to bring you an article published Tuesday, January 13, 2004 in the Gongwer News Service Michigan Report. **The article appears as the final item in this update.**

MEAP MOVES TO DEPT OF ED, NEW "HELP" EMAIL: MEAP@MICHIGAN.GOV

Following an executive order signed by Governor Granholm, MEAP was moved back to the Department of Education effective December 21, 2003. The new email address for the MEAP help desk is meap@michigan.gov. All other MEAP phone numbers and staff email addresses will remain the same. Changes to web site addresses are expected and will be announced when available.

Please note that responsibility for the Michigan Merit Award program remains with the Department of Treasury.

TESTWIZ AVAILABLE FOR USE WITH WINTER 2003 DATA

TestWiz is being provided again this year under a statewide license from dataMetrics Software. TestWiz software has been customized to import and report data from the 2003 MEAP tests for Grades 4,5,7, and 8.

You may access the program through the Michigan MEAP Software section on the www.testwiz.com website. Once you have linked to TestWiz, look for directions and other documentation in the Supplementary Material section. TestWiz updates will be available soon for testing data from Winter 2003 and Spring 2003.

FALL 2003 - DEMOGRAPHIC CORRECTIONS FOR TESTING DUE JANUARY 23

Student rosters from the Fall 2003 MEAP High School Test are posted on the MEAP secure web site. Corrections to demographics are due from districts no later than Friday, January 23. Please see the memo sent earlier this week via email to MEAP coordinators.

To clarify the key dates:

- Schools make demographic updates Monday, January 12, through Friday, January 23.
- MEAP will process changes and initiate results printing Saturday, January 24, through Friday, February 6.
- Schools will begin receiving printed results Tuesday, February 10. In addition, schools will be able to obtain student test score data and research data from the MEAP secure web site.

WINTER 2004 - MATERIALS FOR TESTING SHOULD BE IN DISTRICTS

Materials for the Winter 2004 MEAP test have been shipped to districts. Shipments were scheduled to arrive in districts Monday, January 12. If your district has not received materials, please contact MEAP Scoring Services at 1-877-683-6883.

Also, please check your materials received against the packing list found in box #1. Schools should report shortages to the District MEAP Coordinator. District Coordinators may order additional materials using the Additional Materials Request Form found on page 9 of the MEAP Test Administrator Manual or on the web at: www.meritaward.state.mi.us Forms should be sent via FAX to MEAP Scoring Services at 1-919-425-7733.

SPRING 2004 – OPTING TESTING CYCLES FOR HIGH SCHOOL TESTS

In the next few weeks, letters will be sent to districts in preparation for the Spring 2004 MEAP High School Tests. The spring high school tests will be administered during two testing cycles. District will have the option to choose one of the following test cycles.

Cycle 1: April 26 – May 7

Cycle 2: May 3 – 14

Districts will be asked to indicate their preference on a form and return it to MEAP Scoring Services.

Q&A FROM THE WINTER 2004 MEAP VIDEO CONFERENCE

A list of questions and answers from the Winter 2004 MEAP Video Conference are being distributed today in a separate email to district MEAP coordinators. The list may also be found under "Current Information" at www.meritaward.state.mi.us after Tuesday, January 20.

PROBLEMS ACCESSING THE MEAP SECURE WEB SITE?

For access issues related to the MEAP secure web site, please see your district system coordinator. This is the person in your district who has authorization from your superintendent to create and manage user ID's, passwords, and user rights.

Update editor's note: Following is a copyrighted story reprinted with permission by Gongwer News Service/Michigan (www.gongwer.com). Further distribution and editing of this material is prohibited. The story is printed verbatim including style and grammar. It appeared in the Gongwer News Service Michigan Report, January 13, 2004.

EDUCATION BOARD OPTS TO KEEP M.E.A.P.

As legislative committees gear up discussions on at least abandoning the Michigan Educational Assessment Program High School Test in favor of the ACT, the State Board of Education weighed in unanimously Tuesday for keeping the current testing system.

While one of two experts the Department of Education hired to examine the options and make recommendations said the state should look at the ACT as an option, Ed Roeber, head of the MEAP program, noted that Sharif Shakrani, a Virginia-based testing expert who once worked for the MEAP office, argued against a norm-referenced test at the elementary and middle school levels with the same arguments he used to support the option at the high school level.

Thomas Fisher, a Tennessee-based consultant, did not make specific recommendations on considering a change, but did come up with more arguments against than for switching the programs.

The key issues with changing to the ACT or any other norm referenced test would be inability to align it to Michigan standards, the cost of the change, and the possibility that the U.S. Department of Education would not accept the change in Michigan's compliance plan.

Mr. Roeber argued that a change to the ACT, which is now entirely multiple choice, from the MEAP, which includes constructed answer and essay questions, could be seen as an attempt to make the Michigan testing program easier. The federal No Child Left Behind Act expressly prohibits any changes to state testing programs that could result more schools making adequate yearly progress solely because of the testing program.

Mr. Roeber said it would also be difficult to have the ACT match Michigan's academic standards without adding questions and even some whole tests to it. Mr. Shakrani recommended that, before the state switch, it study the ACT or any other test to see how it aligns with state standards.

ACT officials have said their existing questions largely align with Michigan standards, but Mr. Roeber said their analysis did not indicate whether the questions covered all of the standards. And, while ACT is considering adding a writing test, there are no plans to add a social studies test, so Michigan would have to continue to provide that part of the test.

Mr. Roeber argued that such an arrangement, with the state providing parts of the test, could lead to confusion over which parts of the results to consider when determining if schools are meeting adequate yearly progress.

And State Board of Education President Kathleen Straus (D-Detroit) said the change could make much of the board's and the department's work on the standards irrelevant. "We went to all that trouble approving these and then to go with a test that doesn't relate to them seems ridiculous," she said.

The change to the ACT also would end up costing the state more for its testing program in the long run, Mr. Roeber said. The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, which initially broached the idea of the switch with legislators, showed the proposal would save money.

But Mr. Roeber said the high school principal's analysis only allowed one test opportunity per 11th grade student. He said the MEAP is usually administered to 180 percent of the current graduating class, which includes 10th and 12th graders taking the test early, late or a second time. At that rate, he said the tests would cost about \$30 more per student to administer.

He said the state currently allows each student six opportunities to take the high school test, and he expected that courts would force the state to do the same with the ACT if it began offering that test.

And he argued there would be no staff savings because, while the state would need fewer test developers, it would need that any more administrators to be sure the tests were given to ACT's standards.

Some of the push to switch has been concern over the late release of results, which reached extreme proportions for the most recent tests. But Mr. Roeber said he is taking steps to ensure there is not a repeat of that and is working to standardize the time it takes to release the tests.

The board also gave consensus approval, though there was not official vote, on Mr. Roeber's plan to restructure the MEAP to allow portions of the test to be released each year. Teachers, students and parents would then be able to see, for the core of the test, exactly where students were excelling or falling behind.

The portions of the test that would remain confidential would be a combination of proposed new questions for future tests, which would be released when they became part of the core test, as well as questions to indicate what the test will look like as standards increase over the next five to 10 years. The latter questions would be distributed among tests to allow districts to determine where they need to place efforts, but not to determine the performance of any particular student.

The board also asked Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins to work with university officials to revive the idea of using the MEAP as part of college entrance criteria. Ms. Straus noted that university officials had pledged to do that some 10 years ago during the last major restructuring of the MEAP, but never actually made any admissions changes.